

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**

**Re: DSS Budget**

**March 4, 2011**

**Connie Hedley**

Good Evening chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Connie Hedley. I am a Keep the Promise Coalition member and a Peer Support Specialist employed at Harbor Health Services, a community behavioral health agency in Branford, CT. I am in a unique position being a consumer of mental health services and a staff employee at Harbor Health.

I want to thank the Governor for approaching the budget crisis with fairness, support and understanding of the need for continuing mental health services in the state of CT. Though there are issues of concern for the most vulnerable persons in our community which will be greatly affected by the increase of medical and prescription co-pays and possible cuts in funding, we are grateful for what has been granted to us and are confident that our concerns will be taken into consideration.

I want to share in a capsule my story. In 2005 after a long work history I had a mental breakdown which took my life into a level of destruction that would take many more hours to describe. In short I lost the ability to function in the most menial tasks. I could not drive a car, bathe myself, talk on the phone, shop, cook, clean and of course my working career was over. I was told I would never work again and if I attempted to go back to school I would probably relapse.

Today six year later I stand before you employed, facilitating several support groups for people with mental illness, have achieved the dean's list each semester and many certificates in my field of human services focusing on people in recovery. And I drove the company car with the members of our team at OPTIONS to this event.

I want to emphasize the need to continue funding to non-profit agencies and programs that have supported people like me. To name a few, Greater Bridgeport Mental Health, Bridge House Clubhouse, Southwest Community Health Services, FSW, CT Works, Advocacy Unlimited Inc, Focus on Recovery, and of course Harbor Health Services.

Though I have a support team of family, friends and my Macedonia Church, without these state recovery programs I would not be here today.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concern and your time to listen.

Connie Hedley  
Peer Support Specialist  
Branford, CT